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Youth transitions: Mobility and the travel intentions of 12-20 year olds, Reading, UK

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Abstract:

Whilst Western societies may have reached 'peak car', young people are arguably the most significant group whose levels of car ownership, use and driving licence acquisition have declined. Against this backdrop, the paper discusses qualitative research conducted in Reading, UK considering young people's (aged 12-20) views about bus travel. Whilst current pricing structures (both in Reading and across the UK) often offer under 18s discounted travel, the paper explores young people's intentions about future travel as young adults. Drawing upon theorisations around youth transitions, we discuss how young people expect their mobility patterns to change as young adults in complex, shifting, fluid ways, and to involve multi-modal travel. Young people construct complex choice-biographies through which they plan pathways to navigate these mobility transitions. Although a small-scale study, this paper also offers some insights into the challenges, complexities and limitations of researching mobility intention.

Keywords: Youth, transition, mobility, bus, intention

Introduction: Peak Car, Young People and Mobility

As well as focusing upon space and place, geographers of children, youth and families have increasingly drawn attention to mobility and the movement between spaces (Valentine 2003; Barker et al 2009; Clement and Waitt 2018). The phrase ‘peak car’ (although not an unproblematic term, see Goodwin and Van Dender 2013), describes a levelling off or reduction in levels of car ownership and use, and driving licence acquisition, first seen in Scandinavian countries in the late 1990s (Delbosc and Currie 2014, McLaren in press). However, ‘peak car’ and associated changing mobility patterns are not uniform nor universal and are experienced in different ways in different countries (see Kuhnimhof et al 2013 for more). In the UK, ‘peak car’ consists of a levelling off of car use and a shift to other modes of travel (Kuhnimhof et al. 2013; DfT 2014c). Changing mobility patterns have been recorded across different contexts (e.g. urban and rural areas, see Kuhnimhof et al. 2012a) and amongst different social groups. Of particular interest to this paper are the changing travel patterns of young people.

Changes in mobility amongst young people (variously defined by Delbosc and Currie 2013 and Grimsrud and El-Geneidy 2013 as those aged between 14-30) leave little doubt of a questioning of their associations with cars (Goodwin and Van Dender 2013; Hopkins and Stephenson 2014), particularly amongst young men (Kuhnimhof et al. 2012a). The proportion of young licence holders has fallen across many countries (Delbosc and Currie 2013; Le Vine et al. 2014) and only 31% of UK youth aged 17-20 have a full driving license (DfT 2014c). However, only 9% currently without a licence report never intending to learn to drive (DfT 2014c), suggesting delays in licence acquisition rather than longer term decisions to not drive (Noble 2005; Line et al. 2010; Sigurdardottir et al. 2014). Although around 2/3s of youth have access to a car, there has been a reduction in car availability and car miles travelled (Kuhnimhof et al. 2012a). Whilst cars still dominate mobility patterns (62% of all journeys by UK youth are car based), this proportion is falling (Kuhnimhof et al.

2012a). Multimodality (defined as using multiple modes of transport during a certain period of time) is increasing, and young people report the most marked changes in mobility patterns, compared to other age groups (see Kuhnimhof et al. 2013; van der Waard et al. 2013).

Many different factors shape young people's changing travel patterns (see Delbosc and Currie 2013; Hopkins and Stephenson 2014). Increasing rates of participation in tertiary education (Kuhnimhof et al. 2012a; Delbosc and Currie 2013), growing rates of youth unemployment (van der Waard et al. 2013) and changing housing contexts have contributed to lower rates of youth car ownership and use. Affordability (and perceptions of affordability) are crucial factors (Noble 2005; Delbosc and Currie 2013). Individual mobility patterns are also influenced by broader processes, such as transport policies (Goodwin and Van Dender 2013). Young people appear particularly receptive to the range of public transport initiatives, road charging, parking policies, traffic calming and other motor vehicle restrictions which discourage driving (Kuhnimhof et al. 2012a; Goodwin and Van Dender 2013).

Cultural attitudes about mobility also influence young people's travel patterns. Whilst young people's use and ownership of cars has reduced over the past few decades, high aspirations for young people to drive remain as part of the status of adulthood (van der Waard et al. 2013; Barker 2014; Redshaw 2006). Whilst some indicate awareness of environmental impacts of cars (Kuhnimhof et al. 2012a; van der Waard et al. 2013; McLaren in press), others have questioned the importance of environmental attitudes in decisions about driving or holding a licence (Delbosc and Currie 2013; Sigurdardottir et al. 2014). Whilst some speculate that e-communication has replaced cars as status symbols and reduced young people's need for physical mobility (Kuhnimhof et al. 2012a; van der Waard et al. 2013), others suggest that e-communication facilitates non-car modes of travel (Delbosc and Currie 2013; 2014), whilst Le Vine et al. (2014) identify a clear, positive correlation between internet use and holding a driving licence.

Whilst much discussion explores links between cars and youth, less evidence considers attitudes and experiences of other modes of travel (Jones et al. 2012). Bus use is often stigmatised (BYCYSYSC 2012), and young people perceive public transport to not offer the same freedom, independence, pleasure or status as cars (Line et al. 2010). Despite this, young people are more likely to use buses than any other age group (Moore 2012). In the UK, 18% of young people's journeys are made by bus, compared to 11% of the overall population (DfT 2014a).

A growing recognition that young people's transport needs are not currently met has led to an increase in youth-focused public transport policies (Redshaw 2006). Since young people are a 'price-sensitive population segment' (Grimsrud and El-Geneidy 2013, 16), some transport authorities have introduced universal or targeted travel concessions for young people, e.g. the reduction in subway fares for students aged 18-25 in Montreal (Grimsrud and El-Geneidy 2013) and Holland's free public transport for students (van der Waard et al. 2013). The controversial London free bus travel initiative for under 16s and 16-17 year olds in full time education has aimed to tackle transport poverty, reduce dependence on car travel and reduce social exclusion (Edwards et al. 2013; Goodman et al. 2013; Moore 2012). An interesting example of what happens when financial disincentives to travel are removed, young Londoners speak very highly of their free travel, value its inclusivity and independence, and a 35% increase in ridership has been recorded (Goodman et al. 2013; Edwards et al. 2013). A number of UK local authorities have introduced discounted fares for 16 and 17 year olds (NYA 2007) so that in some areas young bus users now first pay full fare at 18. However, there is a lack of clarity or consistency over how 'youth' is defined, or whether concessions are universal or targeted (DfT 2014a; 2014b). Despite campaigns for UK wide discounted travel for under 18s (BYCYSYSC 2012), travel concessions for young people are localised, inconsistent and patchy (Barker 2012; Mahadevan 2012).

Further, there is growing debate over whether encouraging young people to travel by public transport effects future mobility intentions (Sigurdardottir et al. 2014), and whether young people maintain at least some of their travel behaviours as they age (Kuhnimhof et al. 2012a). Evidence from Montréal indicates that (given an affordable, frequent and dense network) young people's use of public transport is greater into their 30s than previous cohorts. There may be some merit in public transport authorities developing policies to encourage young people to use public transport now in order to influence future travel patterns as adults. However, others suggest these patterns might be 'short-lived' moves away from cars (Hopkins and Stephenson 2014) and that young people's future intentions are often still dominated by desires to drive (Line et al. 2010; Goodwin and Van Dender 2013). However, as yet, there is little research which explores young people's mobility intentions or how they anticipate how/ whether their mobility patterns might change- a gap which this paper seeks to contribute to filling. Furthermore, this paper responds to the call for more research on examining young people's own experiences of mobility (Goodman et al. 2013), and the paper considers, in an age of declining affinity to cars, young people's intentions around future travel, in particular the transition to full adult bus fare and how this might shape future travel intentions.

Our own approach to exploring young people's changing mobility patterns has been informed by theorisations of youth transitions to help make sense of how young people navigate change. A range of human geographers (Jeffrey 2010; Hopkins 2006; Valentine 2003; Hörschelmann, 2018) and others (Thomson and Taylor 2005) have focused on key transitions we experience through our lives. Youth has been shown to be a period of significant transitions, a term '*used to describe the process of change and adjustment between youth and adulthood*' (Cuzzocrea and Collins 2015, 138). Mobility is just one transition (for other geographical research exploring transitions in education, employment, identity, political engagement, intimate relationships, housing etc, see Jeffrey 2010; Hopkins 2006; Valentine 2003; Hörschelmann 2018 amongst others) that young people experience and navigate in the shift from child to adult (Thomson and Taylor 2005). Young people's mobility moves, shifts and

changes as part of broader transitions to adulthood. There is growing consensus that youth transitions have, against a backdrop of 21st Century contemporary societies, been radically reconfigured from more conventional, stable and predictable routes from dependent child/ youth to independent adulthood, to those which are more drawn-out, individualised, contingent, fluid, temporary and non-linear (Furlong and Cartmel 1997; Breeze et al. 2018; King and Williams 2018). Furthermore, conceptualisations of youth transitions as normative, predictable, achievable and outcome focused have been challenged (Jeffrey 2010; Hörschelmann 2018). Moreover, in neo-liberal late modern societies, rather than relying on tradition and convention, young people are unavoidably required to actively develop their own '*choice biographies*', developing pathways to navigate through these transitions (Beck 1992; Thomson, 2007; MacDonald 2011). Different groups of young people may also experience these transitions in radically different ways (Reiter & Schlimbach 2015). Therefore, the paper adds to discussions about youth transitions, through identifying and establishing mobility as a key form of youth transition, and deeply intertwined with other forms of youth transitions. The paper also shows how young people are able to generate narratives through which they skilfully articulate how they intend to navigate pathways through a complex range of youth transitions.

The research project

The research was undertaken in Reading, UK, a large urban area 40 miles to the west of London. Characterised by average levels of unemployment (5.2% in 2015, see ONS 2016), a quarter (25.3%) of the population is non-White (the second highest in the South East England region, an area not including London). Over a quarter (28.3%) of households have no car, higher than the overall South East region (8.85%, see RBC 2014). Reading Buses' discount scheme (initially called 'Solo' and since rebranded to 'Boost'¹) for young people aged under 19, has increased ticket sales and ridership

¹ The no-ID scheme was set up to increase ridership. In 2018, a Boost single cost £1.40 (26% discount on adult fare) and a day Boost pass cost £2.50 (a discount of 44%).

(see Reading Buses 2014). Whilst the research, funded by Reading Buses², sought to answer a broad range of questions (including evaluating young people's views of the scheme), this paper specifically focuses upon considering young people's future travel intentions and what interest young people might have in discounted bus travel for over 18s.

In addition to analysing large-scale quantitative data mapping young people's current bus travel trends³, focus groups with young people were undertaken. Although not unproblematic (see Hopkins 2007 and Winlow et al. 2013 for critical discussions about practical and conceptual issues such as dominating individuals and the need for reflexive consideration of the positionality of facilitators), focus group interviews have been shown to be effective in exploring young people's views in depth, and encourage debate and exchanges of views not possible in individual interviews (Line et al. 2010). A diverse range of providers delivering services used by over 16s in Reading were contacted- three youth centres (including two in areas of deprivation, and one with a high proportion of BME users), one educational provider (who provided inclusive services for young people with learning difficulties) and an elected youth forum expressed interest in taking part. Within each location, a convenience sample was adopted, inviting all young people aged 16-24 to participate, although the final sample in the research involves younger participants than initially anticipated. Some service users aged under 16 felt excluded from the invitations offered to their older peers, and some members of the youth forum (elected as representatives of a broader age range of young people in Reading) were under 16 and wanted to take part- hence they were also invited. Conversely, few of the services approached had users over the age of 20, and none expressed an interest in taking part.

² The researchers would like to thank Reading Buses for generously commissioning the research. The views presented here are those of the authors, and do not represent those of Reading Buses.

³ Not discussed here, since it was a condition of funding that such commercially sensitive information would remain confidential.

In line with University procedures, ethical approval was sought. Potential participants were given information about the research before considering participation. Parents of under 16s were informed about the project and given the opportunity to withdraw their child. Anonymity was assured- pseudonyms are used here. Each participant was given refreshments and a £10 voucher. Eight focus groups (involving a total of 34 young people) were undertaken, involving between two and six young people, lasting between 35 and 55 minutes. One third of participants were aged 12-15, whilst two thirds were 16-20 year olds. Eighteen were young women, sixteen were young men. At least 11 of the participants were from a BME background. Most interviews were facilitated by two researchers, and involved mixed gender and age groups (whoever was interested and available at the time). Ground rules were established, including listening to other participants, and respecting other people's right to hold different views. Every person taking part contributed- though young people often said they didn't 'have much to say' about buses, they spoke passionately, with interviews lasting for up to an hour. Since participants were generally very vocal, only one or two occasions required facilitators to encourage or coax quieter participants to contribute- as experienced researchers we found the greater challenge was (as discussed by Hopkins 2007) facilitating conversation amongst keen participants to ensure that everyone had sufficient time for discussion. Whilst the qualitative data was analysed using a thematic analysis (see Attride-Stirling 2001), looking for categories, themes and patterns relating to the broader research project, this paper reports on one particular theme of 'travel intentions'.

Asking young people to predict future travel patterns has limitations (Line et al 2010). Whilst intentions might be seen to inform future behaviour, they are also speculative. Opinions may not be fully formed or are created with partial or inaccurate knowledge. A myriad of known and unanticipated personal events, critical moments (Thomson et al. 2002) or broader social and economic processes may reshape intentions (Line et al. 2010). Discussions about aspirations can encompass expectations across a wide spectrum of achievability, from hypothetical intentions to more concrete and achievable ones (Pimlott-Wilson 2011; Barker 2014). The results need to be seen with this

limitation in mind. Nonetheless, the research is valuable in discussing how transport authorities can consider shaping services through dialogue to make them more accessible and attractive to young adults.

Young people's mobility intentions

All but one of the participants were bus users (and discussions with the one self-reported non-user also uncovered recent experience of bus travel). Young people explained that buses were an integral part of their everyday mobile lives:

'I always travel by bus, on my own to get to college on time and mostly get the 20 or the 21 to get into town' (Daphne, no age offered)

'I always catch the 17 as well, like to Tilehurst, to college, and sometimes if I'm going to see my friends I always catch the buses 23 and 22' (Sarah, 18)

This finding reflects existing evidence showing the importance of public transport in young people's mobile lives (see NYA 2007; DfT 2014b), and that many young people are habitual bus users (Jones et al. 2012). However, there was less consensus amongst young bus users about their future travel intentions. A wide range of possible mobility futures were described- some young people stated that they intended to continue using buses into adulthood (even when required to pay full adult fare):

'um... I'm probably happy to go by bus personally' (Kate, 20)

'like my friend refuses to get a car because she doesn't want one, she doesn't want to drive, she's gonna use buses and she's just turned 18' (April, 17)

'I think I'd like to learn to drive, but I don't think that I'd be very good.... So no, I'll probably prefer sticking to buses' (Shannon, 12)

However, whilst some young people reported intentions to continue to use buses into adulthood, not everyone stated they wanted to travel by bus in the future as adults:

'(because) some of the bus drivers can be grumpy sometimes' (Sean, 17)

'it's like cramped, like I feel sorry for people who have issues with claustrophobia. I feel sorry for people sometimes because... there are crowds of people, people standing up sometimes, and it's so weird, people standing, some people though just get up and stand in the most stupidest areas, like they stand directly in front of places where (vacant seats) are' (David, 17)

Therefore participants reported mixed intentions around future bus travel. Similarly, young people reported a wide range of travel intentions relating to driving. A wide range of intentions, from vague aspirations to drive to more concrete and detailed plans for achieving this, were discussed:

'My step Dad is looking for a car, but I haven't started driving lessons yet, but it seems to, if you look at it, to be easier (to drive) because you can get people from college and give them a lift to college so it saves them money as well' (Gemma, 19)

'Once I've saved up enough money to get my own car, I won't have to rely on someone else to borrow their car to use all the time' (Maria, 17)

These narratives around aspirations for car driving were often long term, conditional and contained strict qualifiers (e.g. Maria refers to *'once I've saved up...'* and Gemma's account requires future assistance from a family member, the purchase of a car and driving lessons). These accounts reflect other research (such as Goodwin and van Dender 2013; Noble 2005), which suggest that access to or ownership of a car for young people is not likely to be attainable in their immediate future.

Furthermore, in our research, even amongst those currently learning to drive, there was no necessary link between licence holding, car ownership and driving:

'Driving-wise I'm probably not going to drive for a while because there's other things I want to do like concentrate on future purposes ..., I might be taking the bus you know when I'm going off to uni or something like that' (Oliver, 17)

'I don't know what type of car (I'd get), something cheap and not heavy on insurance and tax. I'll probably still be using the buses to save fuel' (Mark, 18)

Two important points are of worthy of consideration here. Firstly, many of these quotes demonstrate that young people's travel intentions are complexly formed, involving the consideration of a range of emerging and fluctuating mobility options. This reflects the findings of Jones et al. (2012), and in turn confirms how young people are knowledgeable mobility actors, who make informed and reasoned mobility decisions. These young people are actively constructing their own *'choice- biographies'* (Thomson 2007) in discussing their mobility futures. These can be seen as examples of the biographical turn in contemporary late modern societies, defined as *'the stories that (young people) tell in order to understand who and what it is possible to be'* (Thomson 2007, 78).

Secondly, many young people's intentions involve combinations of different modes of travel, reflecting Kuhnimnof et al.'s (2012b) work on multimodality amongst German youth. For Oliver and Mark (quoted above), once the aspiration of driving had been achieved, it was anticipated that this would not be the only form of transport, but one option within multi-modal mobility futures. These young people report messy and complex intentions, drawing upon different modes of travel, rather than being committed to one particular mode. These points further strengthen the claim that cars are losing their dominance in the identity formation and cultural symbolism of young people (Kent and Dowling 2013). Drawing upon Sigurdardottir et al.'s (2014) categories, these young people were mostly *'car pragmatists'* or *'car skeptics'*. That very few young people reported immediate intentions

to drive contests Line et al. (2010)'s findings which suggest more decisive aspirations to drive. The accounts from participants suggest at best more deferred aspirations to drive, though also reflect an ongoing interest in driving 'in prospect if not reality' (Green et al. 2014, 41). These accounts suggest that young people do not feel forced to use buses as 'second best', and travelling by car is not the 'obvious' choice. This suggests that there is some potential (as also noted by Grimsrud and El-Geneidy 2013 and Jones et al. 2012 in relation to free travel for under 16s in London) to combat negative and stigmatised perceptions of bus travel and for young people to be persuaded to continue to use buses into their adult lives. However, as the following section highlights, young people overwhelmingly saw future mobility intentions as different to their current mobility patterns, involving *transitions* in their mobility patterns.

Young people, mobility and youth transitions

One key finding from the research is that young people anticipate their mobility patterns will not remain constant or static but rather will change as they get older. These transitions were neatly exemplified in one focus group conversation:

Allan: *'Things are about to get very different about this...'* (Allan, 18)

Michael: *'...I think a lot of people will stop taking buses so frequently [at age 19]...'* (Michael, 17)

Chris: *'they'll probably go back on relying on obviously lifts and stuff because they'll think that [the bus fare] is a ridiculous amount [to pay]'* (Chris, 17)

Michael: *'...or they'll just try and get their [driving] licence'*

These quotes are fascinating as they indicate how future mobility intentions involve *transition*. The young people's description of their intentions rarely involve fixed and permanent mobility patterns. Rather, the above accounts are embedded with phrases such as '*get(ing) very different*', '*stop*', and '*go back*', which, as well as drawing upon mobile metaphors, imply future changes around travel

mode. These findings that young people have awareness that their mobility options will evolve and change, reflect Grimsrud and El-Geneidy's (2013) and Chen and Chao's (2011) description of young people's travel choices and Thomson et al.'s (2002) depiction of choice-biographies as '*unsettled*'. Hence, in addition to a range of other youth transitions relating to education, employment etc (Furlong and Cartmel 1997), these accounts also highlight how mobility is *another form of youth transition*. Young people's transitions are no longer entirely shaped by convention or tradition (Breeze et al. 2018)- rather in contemporary late modern societies, young people required to develop complex, individualised narratives to make sense of navigating pathways through these anticipated uncertain and fluid transitions to adulthood (Beck 1992; Valentine 2003). The production of these choice biographies (rather than through relying on notions of tradition) becomes the key way through which pathways through mobility transitions are generated (Thomson 2007).

Mobility is rarely undertaken for its own sake (Urry and Grieco 2012), although walking for leisure and road trips can be seen as exception to this. Rather, mobility is usually undertaken for the access to spaces, places and opportunities (Featherstone 2004). Similarly, young people's accounts (when discussing possible discounted bus fares for over 18s) highlighted how their intended mobility transitions were intricately interwoven with other youth transitions that they anticipated experiencing over the next few years:

'(a discounted bus card for over 19s) will be quite good because some young people might not have a job by then or they might have lost their job, and then got another one. You're in that stage of not really getting a proper (permanent) job because you're learning your experience first and once you've done that you can keep hold of a proper job' (Louise, 19)

'discount cards are a good idea because they (young people) are going to be using the bus quite a lot to get around because they're students or have a part-time job and stuff like that' (Josh, 14)

'I think that (a bus discount card for young people) would boost quite a lot of people up on the buses, because young people don't get a stable job and don't get stable things until (later on in their lives)'
(Dizzy, 15)

These above accounts, in particular Louise's description of fragmented and precarious youth labour market pathways, Josh's identification of the dual role of student/ worker, and Dizzy's recognition that life *'doesn't get stable until (later on)'* all indicate how mobility transitions are linked to, intertwined with and influenced by a range of other youth transitions. The choice biographies of these young people emphasise how such transitions are shifting, uncertain and unfinished.

Cost and affordability permeated these accounts as key influences to shaping these mobility transitions. Many participants feared that, whilst navigating uncertain and fluid youth transitions, young people would not be able to afford full bus fare at 19. Becoming ineligible for discounted bus travel (and subject to full adult fare) generated an anticipated reduction in bus use and shift to other forms of mobility:

'We don't have a job so we don't really have an income to afford the buses, like it wouldn't be that bad if we had an income, we'd be able to afford it' (Chris, 17).

'[when leaving College at 19], it's quite a price hike for us, I guess- that'll be the worst part about it. In a way, it might sway, especially someone like myself, more to find other transport liking getting a car or going by bike, because of the cost.' (Richard, 19)

'if we have got Solo (discount bus) passes some of the money can go to paying rent and getting transport. So it's sort of things like that, where money goes. Quite a lot, you're stuck, we don't get paid an awful lot of money, it's minimum wage for us' (Kate, 20)

Interestingly, whilst other research has also identified affordability as a barrier to public transport use (see NYA 2007; DfT 2013; BYCSC 2012), cost appeared more centrally in these young people's

accounts than previous research with similar age groups (see Line et al. 2010), perhaps because many were aware of the imminent loss (at age 19) of their discounted travel. Correspondingly, many young people stated that discounted bus fares for young adults would simultaneously benefit those intending to continue using buses, encourage more young adults to travel by bus and perhaps ease some of the complexity and difficulty of navigating other youth transitions:

'I think a lot of young people might find it tough [to pay full fare], they might be strapped for money, I don't actually personally know this but I think it [discount scheme] would definitely increase the turn out of that age group taking the bus, it would definitely be good' (Rebecca, 16)

'I think it [discounted tickets is] a good idea because there are quite a few people who I know that come to college who are 20, 21 and who are walking at the moment because they can't afford it' (Mark, 18)

'Yeah, I'd (benefit from bus discounts), I'd still have enough money left to get a place to live and try and pay bills, stock up on food and drink. We'll probably end up (trying to) get a job, and then a lot of it is the fact that we don't have a job, so we don't have an income to afford the buses. The time period people are trying to look for jobs and stuff, the interviews, the job applications, and there's gonna be less jobs because there's more people coming out of college and universities trying to look for a place' (Chris, 17)

Whilst a body of research explores increasing public transport use amongst young people (Goodman et al. 2013; Edwards et al. 2013), less evidence considers the impact on the mobility of those no longer eligible for discounts. Whilst a small-scale study, this project suggests that a loss of discount and the transition to full adult fare can generate mobility transitions and significantly shape mobility intentions. The keen interest in discounted tickets for young adults expressed by young people in Reading reflects Goodman et al.'s (2014) work which states that removing financial barriers goes a long way to extend young people's mobility options, contribute to modal shift (Grimsrud and El-Geneidy 2013) and help shape young people's future travel intentions.

Interestingly, many of these accounts are replete with examples where young people move beyond individualised neo-liberal choice biographies about mobility futures, and show broader awareness of how wider social and economic processes shape their lives (see Thomson 2007), in this case how these broader contexts determine and influence whether/how and where young people can afford to travel. Further, other participants referred more explicitly to a broader social and collective understanding of the barrier of cost (for example, many accounts above refer to ‘we’ rather than ‘I’). Others referred to concepts of ‘fairness’ or used phrases such as ‘discrimination’ when discussing barriers to mobility, and how these combine with other forms of barriers young people experience to make simultaneous layers of oppression:

‘lots of young people have said actually (full fare) isn’t fair, because we’re young people and we may be charged an adult fare but we don’t earn adult wages’ (James, 14)

‘just be careful not to discriminate (in a discount bus scheme) against those in education as well as those in work. There’s plenty of young people who may not be able to find employment. Some of them do work, so I think it would be fair for every young person, really’ (David, 17)

These quotes highlight that young people’s understandings go beyond neo-liberal choice biographies, and include what Cuzzocrea and Collins (2015) refer to as ‘*collaborative individualization*’. Young people’s current behaviour and intentions are informed not only by individual circumstances but also broader contextual factors beyond young people’s control (see Hopkins and Stephenson 2014) such as transport policy and planning. In this case, our young participants benefited from living in urban area with a dense and regular bus network. Decisions made by policy makers and transport planners (e.g. around any future discounted fare scheme for 19-25 year olds) or broader economic contexts (such as the continuing precariousness of local labour markets for youth, or changes in access to educational

establishments) may well reshape young people's mobility patterns, either offering new opportunities or presenting new barriers which young people themselves cannot contemplate or have little control over.

Conclusion

The paper contributes to geographical debates about mobility, offering insights into debates about how recently identified changes in the travel trends of young people might persist or evolve as they age (Goodwin and Van Dender 2013). The research shows mobility is central to young people's intentions about their future lives (Thomson and Taylor 2005). The 12-20 year olds in this study have skilfully crafted, detailed mobility intentions and carefully consider different future travel options. They report clear if emergent and often diverse future travel intentions, illustrating the diversity of potential future mobility pathways and lifestyles open to young people. At least some (but by no means all) of the participants approaching the transition to full adult fare intended (perhaps however speculatively) for buses to be part of their (often multimodal) future mobile lives (Grimsrud and El-Geneidy 2014; DfT 2014b). Although a small-scale study, the findings suggest that, in an era of flat-lining car use, bus travel may not necessarily be seen as a 'second rate' form of future mobility amongst young people.

The paper contributes to discussions around youth through highlighting that these well-crafted, detailed mobility intentions are not assembled by young people as simplistic, static aspirations. Rather, young people skilfully produce intentions which are already assembled with built-in anticipated changes, fluidity and impermanence (Breeze et al. 2017). Young people anticipate that their mobility patterns will change, illustrating that mobility is a form of youth transition. When discussing mobility intention, young people's focus oscillates rapidly from longer term imagined

futures to more practical and concrete issues. In doing so, young people produce well-constructed pathways to make sense of how to skilfully navigate their own mobility transitions.

Adding to debates about youth transitions, the paper also demonstrates how mobility is but one of many transitions which young people experience, and how young people's mobility transitions are intricately interwoven with other spaces and forms of transition (see Thomson et al. 2002; Valentine 2003). Young people anticipate complexly-pathed mobility transitions will be shaped by (and perhaps shape) other youth transitions. These narratives produced by young people are but one example of the construction of 'choice biographies' (Thomson 2007; MacDonald 2011). Rather than stable and guaranteed mobility futures offered to previous generations of youth, the neo-liberal individual subject (Beck 2002) required of contemporary late modernity forces young people to become responsible agents for constructing their mobility futures. However, these choice biographies are always linked to and shaped by broader economic and social contexts (Thomson 2007)- in this case, mobility intentions are formed against a backdrop of ever-increasingly uncertain climates where much broader economic, political and planning processes may restructure, reconfigure and influence these choice biographies or render them irrelevant. In our research, young people demonstrated an awareness of this- the paper shows that when discussing barriers to mobility, many young people move beyond individualised, neo-liberal choice biographies and also refer to broader collective experiences of mobility inequality and discrimination, and broader contexts over which they have little influence, power or control.

Of interest to policymakers and transport planners, the paper also shows young people are interested in continuing to travel by bus as adults. However, the research also identifies barriers which limit the potential to actualise these future intentions. Cost (particularly the transition to adult fare) is the main barrier to using buses as young adults, a finding more explicitly identified than other similar research

(e.g. Goodwin and Van Dender 2013). This may well be because many participants in our research would soon become ineligible for discounted bus travel. The evidence here indicates a need to also consider pricing policies beyond ‘full fare at 18’. Young people report a willingness to reconsider their travel intentions if costs can be reduced and state that discounted fares into their 20s would be fairer and more accurately reflect the broader, uncertain transitions in their lives. This finding reflects the Montréal experience where reduced fares have contributed to a sustained increased use of public transport by young people (Grimsrud and El-Geneidy 2013). Further research is needed to explore what happens to mobility when individuals become ineligible for discounts- this small-scale study suggests that current pricing policies (requiring full fare at 19 in this example in Reading) may well discourage future intentions to travel by bus. Since Montréal and Reading both have extensive bus networks, further research is needed to explore how intentions may be different (and the barriers reported) in other areas, for example rural areas, or those with limited bus services.

This paper also highlights the value of exploring how transitions are imagined by young people. Although young people outline thoughtful and considered plans, exploring intentions presents certain limitations. Intentions may be rather speculative, and this research has not been able to explore whether these intentions translate into future behaviour (see also Chen and Chao 2011). Further research exploring the validity and measurement of intentions is needed, and more longer-term longitudinal studies to explore how (and whether) intentions change over time and translate into actual behaviour. Despite these limitations, the research shows how young people have clearly shown how they construct multi-layered, complex, fluid and comprehensive mobility intentions, in which they have firmly situated broader youth transitions.

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